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SUBJECT: GON CLOSES PROFESSIONAL MEDIA CENTER

[¶1](#). On June 30 the Ministry of Communication closed Niger's "Maison de la Presse," a professional media center located in Niamey.

[¶2](#). In 2005, Nigerien President Mamadou Tandja instructed the Ministry of Communication to donate to Nigerien journalists a media center that had been constructed for the Francophonie Games. This center became the Maison de la Presse, which was intended to give journalists a place to build media-related capabilities and ethics.

[¶3](#). According to a press release from the Minister of Communication, "unfortunately, the Maison de la Presse has more and more become hostage to some interest groups with hidden goals. If the situation does not stop, it may compromise the genuine missions of this jewel." In a conversation later with some members of the Maison de la Presse, the Minister of Communication stated that he was referring specifically to French and American interests.

[¶4](#). The closure of the Maison de la Presse is largely a symbolic gesture, because it is a media center, and not a media outlet. In fact, new venues have already been found for planned conferences and events. Post occasionally sponsored events at the Maison de la Presse, but so did many other governmental and non-governmental organizations. Most recently, Embassy Niamey's Public Diplomacy section, in collaboration with the Nigerien Association of Editors of the Independent Press (ANEPI) organized a two-day media workshop at the Maison de la Presse to commemorate International Press Freedom Day on May 3. The topic of the conference was "Freedom of Expression: Access to Information and Self-Governance." About 98 journalists from state-run and private media from throughout the country participated in the workshop.

[¶5](#). The members of the Maison de la Presse have publicly condemned the closure of the media center and have denied being held hostage to French and American interests in management of the center.

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